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Wray A2

Final Draft

Rumors of the Devil

*Have you heard of the letters between the Tsarina and the Holy Devil?*

I held my glass of vodka in hand, listening to the chatter of the table. At the table sat a party of the Russian Duma’s extreme right, the rich and high born, gossiping like women about the Holy Devil, Grigory Rasputin:

“Just the other day, the royal nurse, Vishnyakova, complained to the police that Rasputin had violated her.”

“Sophia Tyutcheva, the royal governess, has similar claims.”

“He must have at least ten affairs going on at the same time, including the Tsarina! Just yesterday, the special police revealed to me a series of letters between the Tsarina and Rasputin.”

“That’s not new.”

“That’s not all. In it, one of the letters read, ‘I sacrifice my husband and my heart to you. Love and kisses - Darling.’”

All of us at the table knew that the Tsarina and Tsar were nothing more than a puppet to the ‘monk’ Rasputin. And we all knew no matter how much evidence of Rasputin’s destructive nature was presented, the evidence would all be denied or destroyed.  I sat listening, disgusted to what I was hearing, disgusted about Rasputin.

One man addressed to me, “What do you have to say Mikhail?”

I answered truthfully, “Rasputin is a corrupt and dark force; if we want to save Mother Russia, then we must stop Rasputin. It’s as simple as that.” An echo of agreements rippled through the table, and vodka glasses clinked in cheers. There was no doubt about it—Rasputin needed to be stopped.

“I share your feelings, Mikhail,” said my good friend, Dmitri, “You should talk to Felix Yusupov. I hear he has great plans for Russia’s future, a future without corruption, if you know what I mean.” Both Dmitri and Felix were young, powerful, and rich men, with eyes that reflected their determined character.

“You mean we’re going to kill Rasputin,” I responded.

Dmitri continued, “It is just talk now, but soon, I can promise you, words will become action.”

*People say that Rasputin is the devil incarnate.*

Walking down the halls of Alexander Palace, I see Rasputin walking towards my direction; his shoulders are hunched, and his hands are trembling, his fingers nervously playing with his coat buttons. Once within hearing distance I call out, “Finally sobered up have you, *Rasputa*?”

Rasputin has a maniac expression on his face, his hypnotic and penetrating stare arising from his evil eyes. He is lost in some sort of trance; not in a drunken way, but in the way of a mystic or prophet. I, however, am not intimidated by his gaze.

After his silent response to my taunt, I continue in a whisper, in fear of his police guard overhearing, “Your name describes you so perfectly, *Rasputa*. You are such a good-for-nothing person. I think it would be best if you just stayed home in Prokovskoye, a city far away from here in Petrograd.”

He seems to have woken up from his trance state, opening and closing his mouth a couple times, as if to rid of a bad taste in his mouth. His motions are jerky, as he shifts his weight from foot to foot. I note his hair parted down the middle (some say to conceal an odd like bump reminiscent of a budding horn). He started to speak—jerkily, like his motions, and for the most part, incoherently, “You know Mikhail...the Duma. Has not made... smart decision. I see...dark future. Upon you.”

I presume walking, though Rasputin’s presence and smell still seems to linger beside me, he truly does smell like a goat.

*It’s no secret of where the power lies.*

It is one of the few sunny days of winter, and though the sun tempts me to stay outside, the chilly air is stinging. As I am meandering through a local park, I happen to see Rasputin once more. He is far away, but his posture and jerky walking make it easy to recognize him. There is also a group of five to six women surrounding him; the crazed female admirers fawning over him as he walks. Those women are a stark contrast to the rest of the people in the park, who fear, despise, and stay as far as possible from the holy devil, Rasputin.

Coincidentally, from the opposite direction, a royal and grand carriage is approaching Rasputin. The carriage’s glittering intricate gold pattern and royal red curtains catches the attention of everyone in the park—it is not easy to mistake the Tsarina’s carriage. Once the carriage and Rasputin are within a short distance from each other, the horses and carriage stop, and the Tsarina comes out. The mob of women surrounding Rasputin make way for the Tsarina, as she rushes over to Rasputin, and kisses his hand in the sight of everyone in the park.

How despicable that the Tsarina be reduced to such a low level by him. I am not the only one who thinks so; others in the park either make a grimaced face, whisper degrading comments to their companion, or both. I overhear a bit of a conversation:

“It’s no wonder we are still poor. The government is too corrupt by that Rasputin to do anything.”

“Look at the Tsarina groveling. Can you believe *that* is our government.?”

*Not for long*, I thought.

*The rumor going around tonight is: be prepared.*

I have gotten in touch with Dmitri and Felix Yusupov. It is happening, tonight. The cleansing of the corrupt and dark force of Russia; the death of Rasputin happens tonight, December 16, 1916.

We, the heroes of Russia, waited until 11:30 PM to begin the night’s actions, knowing that Rasputin’s police guard would have left by then. Dmitri would use Felix Yusupov’s military automobile, a rare car reserved for only the richest in Russia, to pick up Rasputin from Rasputin’s apartment. The Holy Devil would be brought to the Felix Yusupov’s home, the Yusupov Palace, in belief that he would finally meet Felix’s wife, who was known as the most beautiful women in the world. Though she was currently visiting relatives elsewhere, Rasputin did not need to know that. I decided to stay at the Yusupov palace to prepare the murder scene. The basement was decorated to look like a miniature dining room—a fireplace cozily nearby, and under the window stood a small table holding poisoned bottles of sherry, port, madeira, and marsala. The table had been set as if a party had just finished, with scattered rumpled napkins around the table, wine glasses half full, a little tea still left over in some cups, and chairs messily placed around the table. On the table, Felix and I placed little pastries on the table, pink and brown pastries that matched the walls of the room. Dr. Lazavert, who joined us tonight, thickly sprinkled on poison on the pink pastries, he left the chocolate ones for Felix. A gramophone was placed upstairs to create the impression of a party occurring upstairs. Then Felix, Dr. Lazavert, and I waited for Dmitri to arrive with Rasputin.

The sound of an automobile entering the yard brought the three of us to our feet. Felix left to greet Rasputin, while Dr. Lazavert and I went into the study so that Rasputin would not see us. Dmitri joined us in the study, and I could hear Felix leading Rasputin into the miniature dining room. When we were sure that Rasputin was in the dining room, the three of us came out of the study and stood by the railing of the stairway leading to the basement. We listened closely to hear the conversation between Felix and Rasputin.

I heard Felix say, “No, my wife’s got company. They’ll be leaving soon. In the meantime let’s have some pastries and wine in here.”

Rasputin’s response was incomprehensible. They started a friendly chat, going through their mutual acquaintances. Exhausting that topic, Rasputin asked for some tea. Felix offered some pastries along with it. To our dismay, Rasputin declined. Rasputin also declined the wine.

*What if Rasputin knew of our plans? Perhaps he really could see the future?* I thought.

After a short time, I heard Felix excuse himself from the room, so the three of us soundlessly hurried back on tiptoe to the study. Felix came in slightly panicked, and said, “Imagine, gentlemen, the animal will not eat or drink.”

“What’s his mood?” Dmitry asks.

“Not good. It’s as if he has had a premonition.” And with that Felix left to return to the dining room.

The three of us also returned to our previous positions by the railing. After a little bit, we heard the sound of wine bottles being uncorked. Dr. Lazavert whispered, “The poison should have an immediate effect, it shouldn’t be long now.” So we went back up to the study to wait for Felix.

A wan Felix entered quite a bit later, two hours later. He exclaimed, “It’s not possible! He drank two glasses of poisoned wine, and ate several pink pastries. Plus he is starting to get worried about why it is taking my wife so long to see him.”

Dmitri nonchalantly spoke up, “Do you mind if I just shoot him?”

I said, “Well, I’ll go get the car ready then. Just bring the body when you are done, and we can go dump him in the river. I’m done with this waiting.” Felix tossed me the key, and I left the house to start the car. I felt like a coward to leave at the moment that Rasputin was actually going to die, but I am not ready to have Rasputin’s spirit haunting me because of a bloody murder. I guess I am a man of words, not of action.

The weather was a mild two to three degrees above freezing and wet snow was falling. Two thunderous shots rang into the silent night air. I wondered if Felix’s palace guard were here tonight, presumably they would already know about tonight’s plans.

It took a surprisingly long time for them to bring the body out. Four more shots rang into the air before, Felix, Dmitri, and Dr. Lazavert exit the house carrying a large bundle wrapped in cloth. Dmitri’s ashen face reflected no emotion; he seemed to be in a semi-conscious state, staring with a vacant gaze.

Just as they were putting the body into the car, the palace guard was walking over to investigate the loud gunshots. The palace guard would have undoubtedly seen the three of them putting the body in. Felix said he would take care of explaining.

Felix asked the guard, “Do you love our father the tsar and our mother Russia?”

“Yes, sir, Your Excellency.”

“And do you know who the most wicked enemy of the tsar and Russia is, and who has taken the tsarina into his hands and through her has been making short work of Russia?” Felix continued.

“Yes, sir. I know. Grigory Rasputin.”

“Well, he is no more. And if you love our mother Russia, you’ll keep quiet about it.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You can go now.”

I was almost positive that the guard would keep quiet; practically everyone, but the Tsarina, wanted Rasputin dead. Ready to dispose of the body, Felix took the driver’s seat, I took passenger seat, and everyone else sat in the back. We drove through the Petrograd darkness. Everyone remained silent, reflecting upon the deed done tonight. The car stopped when we reached a bridge on the outskirts of town that crossed the Malaya Nevka River, where we could drop Rasputin’s body in. Wordlessly, the four of us take the body and throw it into the river.

“Good riddance,” I comment.

*They say Rasputin was still alive when they pulled him out of the river.*

It is not easy to be responsible for the death of a man, even if he is half devil. I have spent a good portion of the morning walking along the Malaya Nevka River. The winter winds numb my body, the water of the river attracting even more icy air. I am shivering, my body sporadically trembling, my teeth chattering. My back is slightly hunched from fighting the wintry air. Yet strangely, on this cold morning, I am not alone outside. Flocks of people are hurrying towards the river with flasks, jugs, and buckets. I am following the crowd, curious to see ­­­­­­the attraction. I ask a man beside, “What is the bucket for?”

He answers, “I want to ladle up some of the water that his body has been floating in.”

I ask, “Whose body?”

“Rasputin’s of course.”

*Rumor goes that the devil never dies.*

Though it has been a couple months since the death of Rasputin, there are still daily rumors still circulating around his death. Blending in with the crowd, I can hear the gossips and whispers passing among the crowd:

“Did you know his hands were raised, as if trying to summon something, when they pulled him out of the river?”

“They say after he was shot, he lay dead for several minutes, then miraculously sat up with the devil’s flame in his eye, and tried to run away.”

“The devil never truly dies, you know.”

“Look! The fire has been started, and they are bringing the body!”

As they brought the body towards the flame, I could smell Rasputin. It seems that the goat smell has never left him. The body was placed in the excruciatingly hot flames, and a crowd cheered ferociously. One man shouted, “Death to the devil!”

Yet as he said that, the body began to sit up in response. The crowd took a step back, as the holy devil was coming back to life to haunt us. Fear coursed through my blood, and I silently prayed to God to spare me. I was sweating from fear, my hands trembling, my eyes wide with horror. People began to disappear, to flee the devil’s presence. Yet here I was, transfixed by the eyes that glared at me, the eyes that penetrated through my soul, luminous eyes wild with the evil demon’s soul that lived within him. Evil, that could never be destroyed.

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Attribution of Research

1. Atchinson, Bob. “Grigori Efimovich Rasputin.” *Alexander Palace.* Alexander Palace Museum. Web. 14 Feb. 2011. <http://www.alexanderpalace.org>.

* Since Rasputin was able to heal the Tsarevich Alexis, the Tsarina was convinced he was sent by God.
* Rasputin had the power to exile his enemies.
* Rasputin was a convenient scapegoat for those who wanted to attack the Tsar’s decisions, but would not confront the Tsar directly.
* Felix Yusupov portrays the murder of Rasputin as a political act to save Russia.

B) “The Devil in the Flesh”. Discovery Channel. *Youtube*. 11 Dec. 2010. Web. 21 Feb. 2011. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clP5tAXHMHY>.

* Rumors went that Rasputin performed miracles through the devil’s power.
* In the people’s eyes, Rasputin was a malevolent influence that represented all things corrupt.
* When the Tsar was at the warfront for WWI, Rasputin practically became Tsar.
* The Tsar and Tsarina needed holy people (i.e Rasputin) to buttress their regime and sanctify their power.
* Rasputin would beat out the demon of luxury in women, and then have sex with them as part of the religious service.
* Rasputin had a pungent appearance, and smelled like a goat according to accounts.
* Rasputin’s body appeared to sit up in the fire when they were burning him.

C) Massie, Robert K. *Nicholas and Alexandra*. New York: Ballatine, 2000. Print.

* Mikhail Rodzianko emigrated to Serbia due to political circumstances, and died in great poverty.
* Quote from Captain Sablain, “The more severely persecutors attacked him [Rasputin], the harsher the Tsarina’s response, and the more quickly they would disappear from the palace.”

D) Radzinsky, Edvard. *The Rasputin File*. New York: Anchor, 2000. Print.

* In the political jargon, Rasputin was known as a “dark force”.
* Rasputin was also known as the “holy devil”.
* Rasputin attempted to change his last name to “Novy,” which didn’t catch on.
* Rasputin’s name comes from the shameful word, “Rasputa,” which means an immoral good for nothing person.
* The extreme right was the rich high-born society and had a covert alliance with the special police.
* Rumors quickly spread about Rasputin leading society ladies and young women astray.
* Rasputin actually did rape Vishnyakova, the royal nurse, as well as Sophia Tyutcheva.
* Newspapers called Rasputin, “Semi-literate and depraved peasant-Khlysty.”
* The Tsarina would call Rasputin, “Our Friend,” and “Elder.”
* The event in the park (where the Tsarina stopped the carriage to kiss Rasputin’s hand in front of the public) was a real event.
* Rasputin needed fear for his power.
* There were lots of police agents assigned to cover Rasputin. They wrote a daily account of all Rasputin’s movements, who he talked to, what he did and when he did it. No public figure received a more detailed description of their life.
* Rasputin’s movements were like a neurasthenic; he hopped jerkily and his hands were always touching something.
* A circle of female admirers formed around Rasputin, and treated him with mystical devotion.
* According to one of Rasputin’s daughters, his hair was always parted down the middle and combed across his forehead to conceal an odd little bump reminiscent of a budding horn.
* Dmitri Pavlovich was involved in the murder, and everyone seemed to know he was involved, though he did not publicly confess.
* Felix Yusupov, as well as Dr. Lazavert was also a major player in the murder.
* One of the letters between the Tsarina and Rasputin actually said, “I sacrifice my husband and my heart to you. Love and kisses - Darling.”
* The “Rasputin Police” left duty at 11:30 PM.
* Rasputin was murdered on December 16, 1916.
* The murderers actually used pink and brown pastries and wine to “poison” Rasputin.
* The murderers turned the basement into a mini dining room, and made it look like it was occupied before Rasputin arrived.
* Felix Yusupov’s military automobile was a rare car reserved for only the richest in Russia
* Yusupov palace was home to Felix Yusupov
* Felix Yusupov’s conversation with the constable did occur, as both testified in court.
* The murderers did have to drive far out to a bridge to find an ice hole to drown Rasputin.
* The police thought they heard gunshots on the night of Rasputin’s murder, but it was really the car starting up.

E) Rosenberg, Jennifer. “Murder of Rasputin.” *20th Century History*. Web. 16 Feb. 2011. <http://history1900s.about.com/od/famouscrimesscandals/a/rasputin.htm>.

* Rasputin was called a variety of names, which include, “The Mad Monk,” “The Black Monk,” “Father Grigori,” “Tiomny,” and “The Saint”.
* The aristocracy could not stand a peasant in such a high position
* The peasants hated Rasputin for the corruption he represented in the government, especially from all the rumors that Rasputin was sleeping with the Tsarina
* Rasputin was born in the city, Prokovskoye, which was far from Petrograd.
* In December 1916 Rasputin’s body was found floating in a river. People rushed with buckets to obtain some of the water in which the holy devil, Rasputin, had been lying in.
* The Malaya Nevka River is a river in Petrograd (St. Petersburg).